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ABSTRACT

Although memory was one of the five canons of classical rhetoric, the more contemporary, narrower definition of memory as the training of the mind to remember certain things has eliminated memory as a useful rhetorical canon. However, teachers of writing who do regard memory highly, can redefine memory to restore it as one of the canons of rhetoric. Plato viewed human memory as a block of wax, located in the soul, on which the things a person heard or thought made an impression. Elsewhere, Plato stated his belief that certain memories were innate. Aristotle saw memory as closely tied with imagination and intellect. To Augustine, memory was "the present of things past." Classical rhetoricians suggested a link between memory and metaphor. Metaphor could invoke memory and invite discourse. Post-modernist writers value memory, as do contemporary literary criticism, feminist rhetoric, and ethnocentric theories of rhetoric. Many writing theorists have emphasized the great importance of memory. Memory is the key to so-called "process writing," as only memory can unlock doors that link people to the past, to understanding, and to each other. As memory is creation, generation, and regeneration, it is the precursor of and companion to invention, arrangement, style, and delivery. (Twenty-six references are attached.) (SG)

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Memory as Muse:
An Argument for a Reconsideration of Memory
As a Canon of Rhetoric

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A great and beautiful invention is memory, always useful both for learning and for life.

Simonides, Dialexis, c.400 B.C.

Once upon a time there were nine muses. The muses were born on the northern face of Mount Olympus, facing Mt. Pierus, the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, or Memory. The nine muses represent all the graces of civilization: poetry, music and song, dance, tragedy and comedy, history. They drank from the springs of Mt. Pierus; these waters were the inspiration for their arts. Although poets throughout time have "drunk from the Pierian spring" for inspiration, originally the Muses served a purpose more functional than inspirational: without writing, it was the Muses who would preserve tradition. They spoke of things of "the present and the before" and also of "the to become" (Havelock, 1986, p. 80) Their parentage--Zeus and Memory--made them "the guardians of the social memory" (Havelock, p. 79). But the Muses have always been thought to inspire; they "cause the soul to remember its forgotten higher estate" (Campbell, 1968, p. 104). Throughout history artists have invoked the muse; as I wrote this paper I myself begged frequently for divine inspiration.

The muse that we invoke, then, and the muse our uncertain students invoke, is a direct descendant of Memory. But when we think of Memory with-a-capital-M in the classic rhetorical sense, we have a different definition. This Memory was one of the five canons of rhetoric, along with Invention, Style, Arrangement and

Delivery. It was the ability to memorize, the tricks for making memory work, so that men could remember their speeches. Nowhere is Memory explained as clearly as in the Rhetorica Ad Herennium, which served as the basis of understanding Memory for centuries. The Ad Herennium was completely concerned with artificial memory, with training the mind to remember "things," which could also be words. Based on this narrow definition, we have eliminated Memory as a useful canon of rhetoric, for now our rhetoric is concerned more with writing, and we have no need for such rote memorization.

Yet as teachers of writing, we do regard memory highly. We can bring memory back as one of the canons of rhetoric. We can redefine it, going for our definition back before Plato and Aristotle to the original myth which sees memory as the mother of the muses. So many of our theories and practices in composition today depend on memory. And these particular theories and practices link us to other disciplines as well. By bringing back memory we're not only working back towards the original five-part concept of rhetoric but we're also bringing rhetoric into a higher place, into the mainstream of humanistic thought, by making the art of rhetoric more complete, dealing not just with style but with being and thinking and formulating ideas and connections. We get closer to philosophy, psychology, literature, and even to modern science.

As I looked for evidence to prove my point, I found myself reaching into so many fields that I was overwhelmed. One

connection led to another, and another, and soon the whole history of man seemed to be at my feet waiting. So I present this paper not as a complete and definitive statement, but as my "musings": my fragments, my attempts to connect and re-connect bits and pieces which make me believe that we honor memory above the other canons of rhetoric and should therefore call it by name.

In its official sense in the canons of rhetoric, Memory (capital-M) did have limited meaning, as I've just mentioned, referring to rote memorization. But all of the classical writers acknowledged a broader, less confined idea of memory (small-m), too. Here are just a few examples.

Plato in Thaetetus assumes we have a block of wax in our souls which is a gift of Memory, Mother of Muses. Whenever we hear or think anything we hold this wax under the perceptions and thoughts and imprint them upon it, just as we make impressions with rings.

In the Phaedrus Plato suggests that some things we learned before our life began; they're innate in our memories.

Plato accused the Sophists of teaching memorization by trivial tricks, where Platonic memory involved "knowledge of the truth and of the soul" that "consists in remembering in the recollection of the ideas once seen by all souls" (Yates, 1966, p. 36).

Aristotle, in De Memoria et Reminiscentia, says that memory belongs to the same part of the soul as imagination; it's a

collection of mental pictures from sense impressions with a time element added. Thought works on the stored images of the past, and the intellect is called into play (Yates, 1966, p. 33).

St. Augustine says that there are not past, present and future as such; he replaces "past" with "the present of things past" which is memory. Does this show his awareness of the constructed nature of the past as it resides in our memory?

In the Confessions he describes "The Wonders of Memory" for pages, describing "the fields and broad palaces of memory, where there are treasures of innumerable images brought in from all sorts of sense objects" (8.12).

Classical rhetoricians all spoke of the value of metaphor, too, and certainly metaphor links with memory. What's a metaphor? It's an image, it°s a picture which stirs the brain and conjures up the familiar to give insight to the unfamiliar. It has to do with touching something recognizable or personal or familiar or common in the listener or reader. Aristotle in the Poetics says "by far the most important thing is to be good at metaphor . . . it is a token of high native gifts, for making good metaphors depends on perceiving the likenesses in things" (p. 60-61). Cicero, in the Orator, tells his students that the only embellishment to use when speaking in plain style is metaphor because all people can understand it; "the borrowing seems to be done to make the meaning clear" (Benson & Prosser, 1988, p. 235). Over time we can remember something through one metaphor or by changing the currency of our metaphor. We use the

method that best suits our memory and invokes memory in the reader or listener, therefore inviting discourse. And when we talk about metaphor, we can begin to link rhetoric back up with literature and imagination and not see them as two different worlds. What does it matter if a metaphor is in an oratorical speech or a romantic poem? It's still a stirring of the memory and it's letting two memories--both speaker and listener, reader and writer--share for a minute.

Memoria: the thing to be remembered. For classical orators the thing to be remembered was their speeches. They trained their memories with practice, for the memory is like a muscle: the more you use it, the stronger it gets. Truman Capote, who used real, word-for-word memorized conversations in his book In Cold Blood, practiced by memorizing the encyclopedia, starting with a sentence a day, doing a bit more each day.

Our memoria can be different: all the fragments of our experience. These fragments are recollected: re-collected. If you take the idea of Piaget's schemata--and the idea of the schemata being the index cards in my head works for me as a metaphor (Wadsworth, 1984)--you can see that recollection is truly re-collection: picking out appropriate cards and putting them in new order to make new sense. Or regluing pottery fragments together but coming out this time with a vase instead of a teapot.

Usually memory works best for things we want to remember; we can pull out facts and faces and places and remember movies or

things we care about. In other words, it's somewhat selective. And yet sometimes it surprises us, bringing us the unexpected at the most unpredictable moment. Proust and Joyce and other writers say that memory is inspired by physical, sensual stimuli. Proust eats a bite of a petite madeleine and goes into forty pages of reverie; Ingmar Bergman sees a young girl on a bike with a yellow ribbon in her hair flapping in the breeze and the ribbon brings up a memory and gives him the whole notion for his movie "Wild Strawberries." On the other hand, many writers consciously provoke memory to get inspiration: think of Hemingway, who read his work over from the beginning every day before starting to write.

Because memory works in fragments, when we store stuff or pull it back out it's not in big stories or wholes but in pieces. This is different than conscious memory use in an oral culture, for oral cultures demanded memory in bigger pieces: patterns, wholes, formulaic structures. Are there still times when our memory takes this form? If so, when, and during what processes? This is a question I would like to explore. Usually in the act of thinking or remembering we get a piece, a fragment. Is that little piece our muse? Maybe it is. That's what <u>musing</u> is: letting the thoughts stir around till a fragment pops up in front of you. It's sort of like a firework: first you get the pop of the thing taking off, and then you wait expectantly for the explosion but you don't know what form or color it will take. You're caught by surprise. Donald Murray (1984) said it's the

surprise that makes writing nice. And it is. And as a writer you can't get that if you're stuck worrying about form and rules.

The memory is a muse. It's our inspiration to write, and it has to do with madness. Plato tells us that there are two kinds of madness, "one arising from human diseases, and the other from a divine release from the customary habits" (Phaedrus, p. 134). It's interesting that he calls divine madness "release from customary habits": how much time in writing classes is spent trying to teach "customary habits"? This reminds me of Kenneth Bruffee's statement (1984) that it's "abnormal" discourse that we like to listen to; it goes beyond and rises above normal discourse. Joseph Campbell in The Masks of God (1968) argues that the unfolding of many great civilizations was marked by signs of insanity--divine madness?--the pyramids, the royal tombs of Ur, the great cathedrals of the twelfth and thirteenth century. He says that these times were mythologically, not economically, inspired (p. 46). How many writing teachers have spent most of their teaching time trying to stamp out, rather than encourage, flickers of divine madness?

The work of post-modernist writers seems to me a tribute to memory. Writing from memory, they are giving up externally imposed structures for freer forms, which appear to the reader in the shape of the memory fragments themselves, sometimes disconnected, sometimes connected in unexpected fashion. Contemporary literary criticism respects memory too: psychological (the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan is

based on Freud and emphasizes the unconscious), deconstruction, reader-response, and feminist. All of these theories invoke something from the reader: a way of reading and a way of responding that puts his or her own personality or experience or memory to work, redefining (reconstructing) the work or the self in the process. Any time we espouse a literary theory which honors both the reader and the text, which asks students both to construct the text for themselves and then to use that construction to learn about themselves, we're talking about using and adding to experience: memory.

A feminist rhetoric depends on memory. One must read like a woman. This can be done "by encouraging students to play with language, to stretch it, form it, caress it" thus giving them back "the pleasure of the text" (Juncker, 1988, p. 432). "Write yourself," Helene Cixous says. "Your body must be heard." Cixous and Julia Kristeva and others explore the unconsciousness too: "the space of love and dreams"(qtd. in Juncker, 1988, p. 426). The feminine way of looking at things regards the personal, that which is stirred up from experience, more highly. We search the memory of the heart and of the soul. The intuitive knowing--feminine intuition--does that have something to do with memory too? It should.

Ethnocentric theories of rhetoric trust in memory as well: the whole idea of "nommo" (word magic) in African culture, of soul, of jazz, of circular thinking rather than linear thinking. Linear Eurocentric thinking keeps moving us forward; if circular

African thinking keeps bringing us around, isn't that a lack of separation of the past, present and future and therefore a linking up of all things past, which of course are only there if they're in your memory with the present and the future? This then brings up the ideas of collective memory, or what Asante (1987) calls ancestral memory. And Paulo Freire's ideas of knowing apply to this too: "Human beings are not just what they are, but also what they were; they are in a state of being . . ." (132). As we consider these new rhetorics which differ so dramatically from our classical, male, Eurocentric rhetoric, we see world views tied up more with both the individual mind and the individual and collective past, and therefore with memory.

We can go farther and look at memory not just as that thing inside our heads but as all the external storage possibilities, too: libraries, texts themselves, other people, and now of course the easy-to-access computer memory. Consider some of the differences: all these means of storage, though in one sense more permanent than our minds, are in another way plastic and disposable--books, hard drives, film. Also, in these forms the original is not re-collected; it's as before, which may not be as it's needed now. The important connections seem to be in our heads. Yet we have to deal with all these kinds of memory and use them accordingly and see the difference.

Computer memory opens a whole new field of study. What possibilities we have with hypertext alone! Suddenly we are redefining what memory is and what it can do. Science and

technology are changing the concept of memory faster than we can absorb those changes. The recent movie "Total Recall" suggests a time when scientists will be able to inject the memory of one person into another, thus giving us a whole new life of experience. Science fiction? Who knows?

Memory is getting into ourselves and getting out of ourselves. All that we care about and do is a response to what we have been and done. We are therefore unique. Our passions and shortcomings and hangups and fears come from our singular pasts. We can connect with other people when we can share some common memory, even if it's indirect, like through a metaphor. We make meaning by connecting with each other's pasts. We connect with texts that way too. When you write in forms and structures externally imposed, you limit the possibility for all that. No muse, I guess. And I believe it's this absence of a muse that we as teachers have mourned, and that's what is bringing memory back into composition theory now. All of you who say that personal narrative and prewriting and freewriting and brainstorming and journals and peer groups will help us write are showing respect for and handing the responsibility for creation partly to memory. Take the last CCCC program guide and look at titles of panels. Topics which relate to the use of memory abound. We just haven't categorized these practices under a heading called "memory."

Certainly anybody we could categorize as a proponent of expressive writing fits here. But they aren't the only ones. In

fact this paper could easily be twenty minutes of quotations from composition's finest as I search for connections among a variety of writers. Listen to a few of them:

Ann Berthoff in The Making of Meaning (1981) and all her work talks about reclaiming the imagination. Though she doesn't put the whole argument in terms of memory she's for getting to the personal, for bringing things to consciousness and then using the imagination (which forms meaning) to come up with something good. Her whole philosophy fits right into all this, seeing memory as a big part of the reclamation of imagination.

Flower and Hayes (1981) see long-term memory as one of the three major elements involved in writing; here is stored knowledge of topic and audience and writing plans.

Janet Emig (1977) says that writing "connects the three major tenses [past, present, future] of our experience to make meaning" (p. 129). She quotes Vygotsky: "writing represents an expansion of inner speech, the mode whereby we talk to ourselves" (p. 127).

James Britton (1983) tells us that by reading and being read to we can internalize forms and rhythms of the written language which we have to draw upon when it's time to write. He says that writing begins by "drawing upon interpreted experience" and even "a more direct apperception of the felt quality of 'experiencing'" (p. 17) Thus writing can become a contemplative act.

Sondra Perl (1988) documents three recursive features in

composing; one she calls the "felt sense" (p. 114). It's a move "to feelings or non-verbalized perceptions that surround words, or to what the words already present evoke in the writer, to what is physically felt. Philosopher Eugene Gendlin calls this "the soft underbody of thought . . . a bodily awareness that. . . encompasses everything you feel and know about a given subject at a given time. It is felt in the body, yet it has meanings. It is body and mind before they split apart" (Perl, 1988, p. 115). She likens "felt sense" to "inner voice" and "inspiration," terms of professional writers (p. 116).

Stephen Witte's (1987) notion of "pre-text" is another plea for looking at memory specifically as a part of the composing process. He defines pre-text as

> a writer's tentative linguistic representation of intended meaning, a "trial location" that is produced in the mind, stored in the writer's memory, and sometimes manipulated mentally prior to being translated as written text. (p. 397)

This argues for the immediate use of memory in what cognitivists would call the planning or translating stages of composing.

I find it interesting that so many of these arguments stress the prelingual, pre-representational nature of these memories. And all these theories make a plug for memory, not only for finding what's in there but also lending more respectability to the way it comes out of there, too. Apparently many of us believe that stirring the memory is the prime means of beginning to have something to say. And I think if we can look at the composition of all writing, even that which we've labelled as

expository or persuasive, as having started with some inspiration or having a muse, then we can link back to imagination, which links us back to literature. Linking literature and composition back up in a very real way again, linking writing to a much larger body of intellectual thought--that's what a belief in memory-as-muse can do.

This is a bigger vision of memory than that of those who have disregarded it as memorization for speech making, but it's not without roots in rhetorical history. At the turn of the eighteenth century, Giambattista Vico set forth a definition of memory much larger than those which had preceded it. "Memory," he said, "thus has three different aspects: memory when it remembers things, imagination when it alters or imitates them, and invention when it gives them a new turn or puts them into proper arrangement or relationship." Memory then is a crucial part of a "modern, generative rhetoric." It is "experience imagined and invented, altered and arranged, recollected and re-associated"; it "makes experience" (Covino, 1988, p. 61,62). Vico seems to echo the thoughts of his predeccessor Giordano Bruno: "the artist, the poet, the philosopher are all one, for the Mother of the Muses is Memory. Nothing comes out but what has first been formed within, and it is therefore within that the significant work is done" (Yates, 1966, p. 305).

Memory is so powerful; it can change us completely. Psychoanalysis and support group effectiveness attest to the fact that, although memories can be immobilizing, the only way to

recover mobility is to dredge them back up and deal with them. In Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, Scrooge meets the ghost of Christmas past--memory--and he's never the same again. Without memory, we are infants again: Alzheimer's disease attests to this.

I am arguing that memory is the key to the process in the term "process writing," and only memory can unlock the doors which link us to our own pasts, to understanding, and to each other. Memory is creation, generation and regeneration, invention, and inspiration. By officially recognizing it as the precursor of and companion to invention, arrangement, style, and delivery, we acknowledge the creative powers at work in writing and we are free to deliver ourselves up to our muse.

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